

allow Members on both sides to offer amendments which could pass and could improve the underlying bill.

It goes without saying that this bill did not go through regular order, which is nothing more than saying it didn't go through the normal committee process. But the benefit of going through the normal committee process is that both majority and minority Members get a chance to participate in writing a bill in the committee even before it comes to the floor.

So now that we have a bill that was negotiated and which, I suppose, at some point we will see in the light of day, but one that was negotiated by only a small fraction of Senators, it is even more critical that we have an open amendment process.

As I said earlier, a transportation infrastructure bill ordinarily would go through an arduous process, through, I think, at least three standing committees—through the Banking Committee, through the Commerce Committee, and through the Environment and Public Works Committee. But that did not happen here.

The bipartisan group of Senators did find common ground among themselves, and now it is time for the full Senate to have the opportunity to offer changes that will improve this legislation and allow all Senators a chance to participate in shaping them.

Our friend, Senator PORTMAN, the Senator from Ohio, said the bipartisan group is committed to having a fair process that allows both sides an opportunity to amend the bill. Senator MCCONNELL has also called for a robust, bipartisan floor process. So I would encourage Senator SCHUMER, the floor leader, to accept amendments from Members of both sides of the aisle to strengthen the legislation and ensure that it meets the needs of our constituents.

There is no question that the roads and bridges across the country are in need of repair. Every year, the American Society of Civil Engineers evaluates the state of our infrastructure and issues a report card to let us know how we are doing.

Well, America is barely passing with a C-minus. Texas is faring slightly better than the rest of the class, with a C. But it is time, as you can tell, for us to invest in our roads and bridges and the ports and waterways that fuel our economy and the broadband that keeps us connected.

I have been disappointed that Senator SCHUMER has seen fit to try to force us to vote on a bill that does not yet exist in its entirety, but I hope we can now pump the brakes a little bit and take the time and care to evaluate the benefits and the costs of this legislation, and I hope that there will be an amendment process available to both sides of the aisle to ensure that our infrastructure investments are made fairly and they are paid for responsibly.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PETERS). The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HICKENLOOPER). Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader is recognized.

REMEMBERING CARL LEVIN

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I am sorry to begin my remarks today with a third Senate eulogy for this week alone.

Last evening, we received word that our former colleague from Michigan, Senator Carl Levin, passed away at the age of 87. Carl's fellow Michiganders elected and reelected him six times. He was the longest serving Senator from Michigan ever. His home State liked what they had in this passionate activist turned attorney, turned public servant. His dutiful, diligent, and detail-oriented approach led Senator Levin to build expertise and win respect across a huge range of issues.

The pinnacle of our colleague's career was his years atop the Senate Armed Services Committee. I certainly did not always reach the same conclusions that Carl did, but his independence, his genuine humble curiosity, and his affection for the men and women who wear the uniform were impossible to dispute.

He was earnest. He was solid, forthright, and devoted to the defense of our Nation in ways that he thought best.

I especially admired Carl's courageous, consistent defense of the Senate filibuster and the unique structures that define this institution. He never let short-term political facts cloud his long-term judgment in that crucial area.

I know all of our condolences go out to Barbara and the entire Levin family today and to all Senators, staff, and friends who will miss our colleague.

THE ECONOMY

Now, Mr. President, on a completely different matter, we learned yesterday that last quarter, our GDP finally regained its prepandemic level. It has taken about a year of economic growth just to recover back to where we started.

Obviously, we are still far below where our pre-COVID trajectory would have had us today. Before this 100-year pandemic, Republican policies had helped build the best economic moment for American workers in recent memory. Unemployment was at remarkable lows. Wages were on the rise. Pay was growing faster for workers toward the bottom of the income scale—actually faster than those at the top.

That was then. This is now. For the last several months, a different philosophy has guided our recovery. Our

Democratic friends believe in borrowing, spending, and taxing at dizzying rates. They want to engineer some kind of socialist recovery from the top down. So how is it going? Well, that GDP report that came out yesterday was actually a substantial miss. Our economy grew almost 25 percent slower than the experts had predicted—another economic disappointment.

Now, remember, this new administration and this Democratic Congress were set up for success unlike any other transition we had seen in our lifetimes. They inherited not one, not two, but three safe and effective vaccines that were spreading around the country. They inherited an economy that was raring to come back, thanks to five bipartisan rescue packages we passed last year.

But instead of helping the American people get back to normal, Democrats decided they wanted to build back bloated—build back bloated. They jammed through a massive \$2 trillion so-called COVID package that only spent about 1 percent on vaccinations and less than 10 percent on public health. The rest went to a litany—a literal litany—of inflationary liberal spending.

Now American families are paying the price: slower hiring than expected, slower growth than expected, a weaker comeback than expected. Their policies are sticking it to the middle-class families through higher prices at the grocery store, at the gas pump, at the hardware store, at the car dealership, in the housing market, and practically everywhere else that matters to families.

Employers large and small, down to Main Street shops and construction sites, are struggling to hire and turning down work because Democrats decided taxpayers should keep directly paying people to stay home. Our country is flooded with safe, effective, and free vaccines for anyone who wants one, but Democrats are still making small businesses bid against a special government handout that rewards, believe it or not, not working.

Our bipartisan work last year left our country primed and ready for a comeback summer, but it is becoming clearer and clearer that Democrats in the Capitol and down Pennsylvania Avenue pursued economic policies that have fumbled the handoff.

Now, in the days ahead, Democrats want to steamroll ahead with yet another reckless tax-and-spending spree: more untinged borrowing, printing, and spending; more welfare spending with no—listen to this—no work requirements; everything from amnesty to big chunks of the Green New Deal and historic tax hikes poured on top for good measure. This kind of reckless taxing-and-spending spree would make their last failed package look like a walk in the park, and the pain that families are already feeling would just be beginning.